

MARVEL
COMICS



CAPTAIN
AMERICA

MAY '97 7

CAPTAIN AMERICA



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CROSSROADS

SO IN LIGHT
OF WHAT IS ABOUT
TO HAPPEN, I THINK
IT'S TIME I KNEW
EVERYTHING.
EVERYTHING
ABOUT CAPTAIN
AMERICA.



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AND YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, DON'T YOU, FURY?

THEY SAY YOU HELPED WRITE THE LEGEND.

AND I'M SURE ANYTHING LEFT OUT... ANY SMOKY LITTLE DETAILS YOU MIGHT HAVE FORGOTTEN, CAN BE FILLED IN BY YOUR...

...IS "ASSOCIATE" THE RIGHT WORD...

...YOUR ASSOCIATE, VAL DE LA FONTAINE.



I'M NOT SURE YOU WANT TO KNOW ALL THE DETAILS, SIR. YOUR PREDECESSORS CHOSE TO ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT ITS SECRETS. YOU KNOW?

I MEAN, THE LAST PRESIDENT WHO KNEW EVERYTHING RESIGNED. THOSE THAT FOLLOWED HIM LEARNED FROM HIS MISTAKE.



NIXON? NIXON KNEW?

YOU THINK THOSE MISSING MINUTES OF THE WATERGATE TAPES WERE ABOUT SOMETHING AS MUNDANE AS A BREAK IN?



NIXON
KNEW ABOUT
CAPTAIN AMERICA,
SIR. AND HE CHOSE
TO VACATE HIS SEAT
OF OFFICE, RATHER
THAN REVEAL WHAT
HE KNEW TO THE
WORLD.

BUT
CAPTAIN AMERICA
IS OUR **GREATEST**
TRIUMPH -- THE STARS
AND STRIPES COMING TO
LIFE TO DEFEND US. WHAT
COULD BE SO TERRIBLE
THAT IT **HAD** TO BE
SUPPRESSED?

YES,
CAPTAIN AMERICA
WAS THIS COUNTRY'S
GREATEST TRIUMPH,
SIR. HE WAS
INDEED.

BUT HE
WAS ALSO
OUR GREATEST
DISGRACE.



I
THINK I'D
LIKE TO KNOW,
HELL, I MAY NOT
SEE THE END OF MY
PRESENT TERM AS
IT IS, SO WHAT
HARM COULD
IT DO?

SPILL
IT.



ALL RIGHT, SIR.
THEN LET ME **BEGIN**
BY ASKING YOU
WHAT YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE
LEGEND.

THE
LEGEND...
IS THE LEGEND.
EVERYBODY
KNOWS
IT...



"CAPTAIN AMERICA --
MUSCULAR, BLOND,
HANDSOME.

"THE *EPITOME* OF EVERYTHING
GOOD ABOUT THIS COUNTRY. HE
EMERGED FROM OBSCURITY...

"...NO DOUBT
FROM OUT OF AN
IOWA CORNFIELD...

"...TO ANSWER
THE CALL WHEN
HIS COUNTRY
NEEDED HIM.

"WE WERE AT *WAR*. THERE
WAS AN *ENEMY* TO DEFEAT.
AND HE DROPPED THE COSTUME
AND FOUGHT FOR WHAT WE
ALL KNEW WAS RIGHT."



YES, WELL
AS LEGENDS GO,
IT'S A GOOD ONE.
RIGHT UP THERE WITH
GEORGE WASHINGTON
CHOPPING HIS
DAD'S CHERRY
TREE.

NO ONE
TALKS ABOUT
WASHINGTON OWNING
SLAVES AND GROWING HEMP.
NO ONE TALKS ABOUT HIM
PUTTING ILLUMINATI
SYMBOLS ON OUR
CURRENCY.



SO,
YOU'RE SAYING
WHAT I KNOW ABOUT
CAPTAIN AMERICA
IS A LIE?

NO, SIR. NOT
ENTIRELY.



I MEAN,
HE DID APPEAR
WHEN HIS COUNTRY
NEEDED HIM. HE
DID ANSWER THE
CALL.

BUT
HE WAS NO
IOWA FARM
BOY...



"...AND HE CERTAINLY WASN'T MUSCULAR OR HANDSOME."

"HIS NAME WAS STEVE ROGERS AND HE WAS A WEAKLING. AMERICA CERTAINLY DIDN'T WANT HIM, NOT FOR WORLD WAR II NOR ANY OTHER FIGHT."

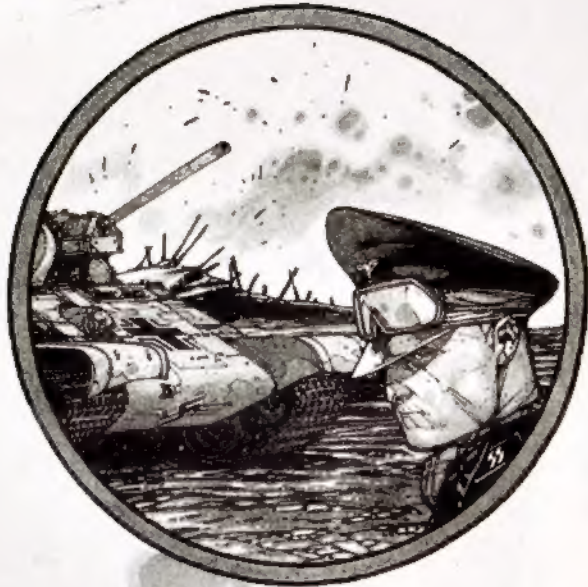
"BECAUSE THE STATE HE WAS IN THEN, HE WOULD HAVE HELPED TO LOSE IT."

"BUT WITH ROGERS IT *DID* WORK. WHY? WE DON'T KNOW. PERHAPS WE NEVER WILL."

"BUT WE HAD A SCIENTIST WITH A FORMULA. WE'D TESTED IT ON A LOT OF MEN... THEIR PHYSIOLOGY WAS WRONG, THOUGH... IT *DIDN'T* WORK ON ANY OF THEM."

"SOME OF THEM IT KILLED."

"WITH ROGERS IT WORKED..."



**"... AND CAPTAIN
AMERICA WAS BORN!"**



"HE FOUGHT THE
NATION'S ENEMIES."

"THE RED
SKULL."

"COLONEL
VON WAGNER."

"THE IRON
VALKYRIE."

"PLUS LIKE A BILLION
AND ONE NAZIS. THE
GERMAN GRAY DIDN'T
HAVE A CHANCE
AGAINST AMERICA'S
RED, WHITE AND BLUE."



AND THEN
LATE IN THE WAR...
WHEN EVERYTHING WAS
COMING TO AN END...
AND VICTORY WAS
ASSURED, HE WENT
AWAY.

I
KNOW THIS
PART.

HE'D DONE
ENOUGH. HE WAS
TIRED. ONE REPORT
SAID HE WAS MORTALLY
WOUNDED KILLING THE RED
SKULL AND HE WENT OFF TO
DIE WITH DIGNITY AND SPARE
HIS COUNTRY THE SHOCK
AND THE ORDEAL OF
BURYING
HIM.

THEN
THERE'S THE
RUMOR THAT HE WAS
FROZEN IN ICE. THAT HE
ONLY THAWED OUT
RECENTLY.

OR THERE'S THE
TIME MACHINE
THEORY.

OR THE
ENERGY
VORTEX HE
WAS
SUCKED
INTO.

AND THEN THERE'S THE
STORY THAT BEFORE
HE DIED, HE GAVE BIRTH
TO A SON. A BEAUTIFUL
BOY WHO GREW UP
AND IN TURN HAD
A SON.

THERE'S
TALK THAT THIS
BOY, NOW A MAN,
IS THE CAPTAIN
AMERICA WE SEE
TODAY.

AND I WISH ANY
OF THOSE STORIES
WERE TRUE, SIR.
WITH ALL MY
HEART.

THEY'RE
NOT?

THEN WHAT
IS THE TRUTH? WHAT DID
HAPPEN? WHY DID CAPTAIN
AMERICA GO AWAY
IN '45?

WE
SHUT HIM
DOWN,
SIR.

HIS OWN
COUNTRY. THE
COUNTRY HE FOUGHT
FOR AND LOVED. THE
COUNTRY HE WOULD
HAVE DIED
FOR...





WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, FURY? HE'S NOT A MACHINE.

NO. BUT THEN... I GUESS WE THOUGHT DIFFERENTLY.

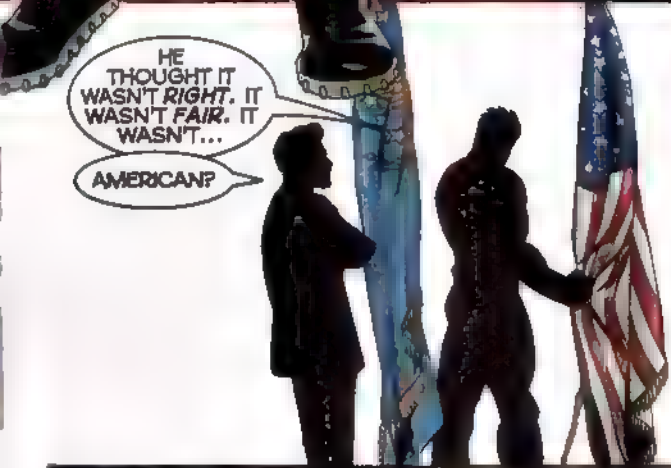


THE CAPTAIN WAS OUR BOY. OUR CHAMPION. WHEN HE TURNED ON US... REBELLED... WE MAY HAVE OVERREACTED.

WHAT DID HE REBEL AGAINST? A MISSION? SOME DIRTY JOB YOU WANTED HIM TO DO?
NO.



THE BOMB.

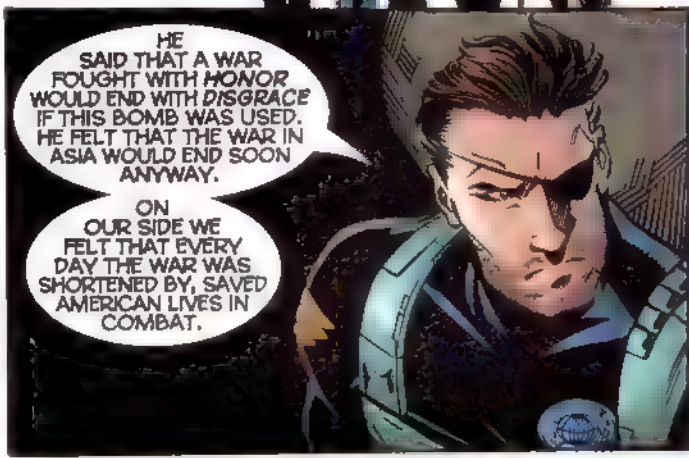


HE THOUGHT IT WASN'T RIGHT. IT WASN'T FAIR. IT WASN'T...
AMERICAN?



ALL RIGHT. THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO THE ARGUMENT. I CAN SEE THAT...

...BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE, MAN, WASN'T CAPTAIN AMERICA ALLOWED TO DISAGREE WITH YOU, WITHOUT YOU... ERR... WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU DO TO HIM ANYWAY?
HOW DO YOU SHUT A MAN DOWN?



HE SAID THAT A WAR FOUGHT WITH HONOR WOULD END WITH DISGRACE IF THIS BOMB WAS USED. HE FELT THAT THE WAR IN ASIA WOULD END SOON ANYWAY.

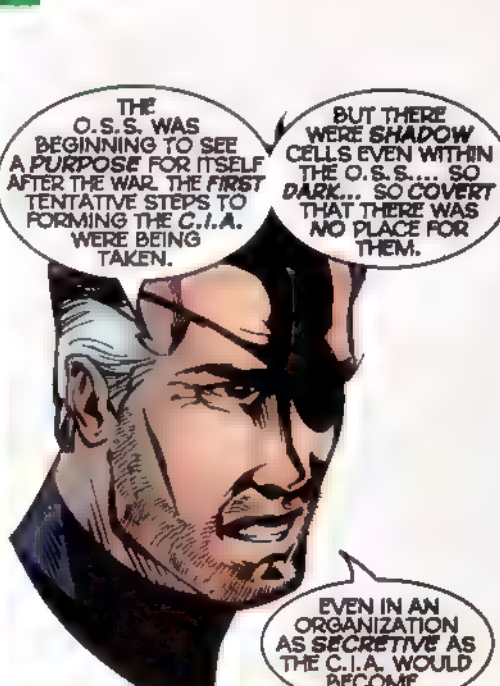
ON OUR SIDE WE FELT THAT EVERY DAY THE WAR WAS SHORTENED BY, SAVED AMERICAN LIVES IN COMBAT.



A FORM OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION. WE'VE HAD THE KNOWLEDGE FOR A WHILE.

WE?
S.H.I.E.L.D.

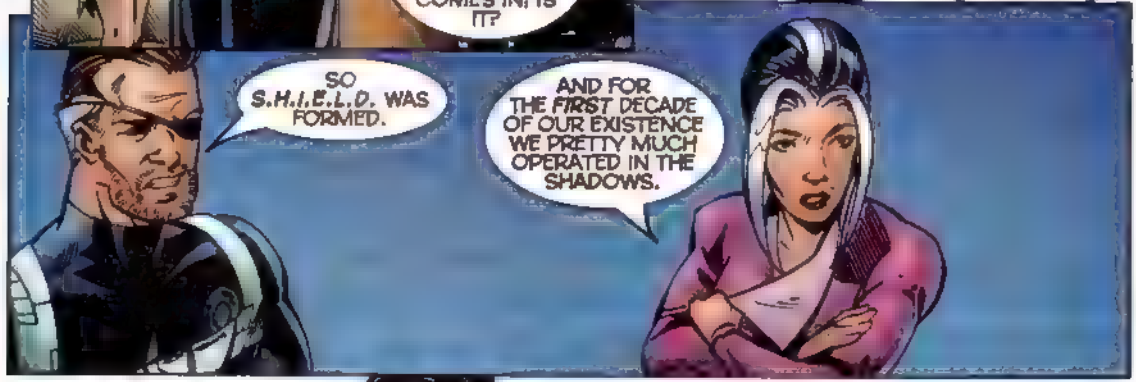
OH, SO THIS IS WHERE YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION COMES IN, IS IT?



THE O.S.S. WAS BEGINNING TO SEE A PURPOSE FOR ITSELF AFTER THE WAR. THE FIRST TENTATIVE STEPS TO FORMING THE C.I.A. WERE BEING TAKEN.

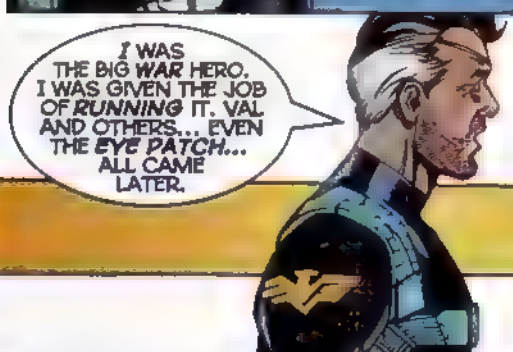
BUT THERE WERE SHADOW CELLS EVEN WITHIN THE O.S.S.... SO DARK... SO COVERT THAT THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR THEM.

EVEN IN AN ORGANIZATION AS SECRETIVE AS THE C.I.A. WOULD BECOME.

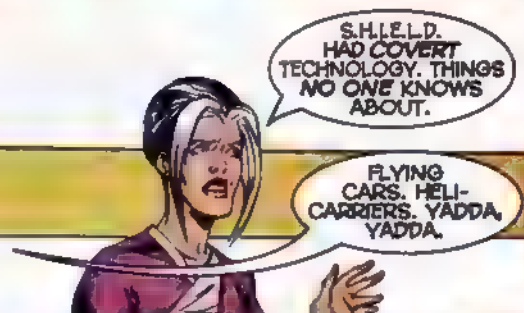


SO S.H.I.E.L.D. WAS FORMED.

AND FOR THE FIRST DECADE OF OUR EXISTENCE WE PRETTY MUCH OPERATED IN THE SHADOWS.



I WAS THE BIG WAR HERO. I WAS GIVEN THE JOB OF RUNNING IT. VAL AND OTHERS... EVEN THE EYE PATCH... ALL CAME LATER.



S.H.I.E.L.D. HAD COVERT TECHNOLOGY. THINGS NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT.

FLYING CARS. HELI-CARRIERS. YADDA, YADDA.



I GUESS THE WORLD'S CATCHING UP OF LATE, WITH EVERYTHING STARK INDUSTRIES AND RICHARDS OF THE FF ARE BOTH STARTING TO DO... BUT YEAH, S.H.I.E.L.D. HAS A FEW SPECIAL TRICKS.



LIKE PRESERVING A MAN?

A MAN LIKE CAP. YEAH. NOT EVERYBODY COULD WITHSTAND THE RIGORS OF THE PROCESS, BUT CAPTAIN AMERICA COULD...



"...SO WE PUT HIM ON ICE.

"...FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST.

"NOT THAT WE DIDN'T THAW HIM OUT FROM TIME TO TIME.

"MAKE SURE HIS PUMPS AND PISTONS WERE ALL WORKING.

"WE'D WORK ON HIS HEAD FROM TIME TO TIME, TOO. TRY TO RECONFIGURE HOW HE THOUGHT.

"AND THEN WE'D ROAD-TEST HIM.

"KOREA CAME IN USEFUL FOR THAT.

"NO COSTUME OF COURSE. WE GAVE HIM A DISTINCTIVE NAME, JOHN BATTLE. GAVE HIM THE RANK OF CAPTAIN. AND POINTED HIM AT THE ENEMY.

"CAPTAIN BATTLE BECAME A MINI-LEGEND ALL HIS OWN FOR A YEAR OR TWO IN THOSE EARLY 1950'S.

"THEN VIETNAM.

"HE WAS CAPTAIN JACK STRIKE THEN. CAPTAIN STRIKE.

"WE PUT HIM IN CHARGE OF A BLACK OPS TEAM AND LET HIM RIP THEM TOO. THAT WAS ONE OF OUR BETTER RESULTS...

"THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT WOULD DRIVE HIM OVER THE EDGE. THAT WAS OF OUR PROBLEM.

"IN 'NAM, IT WAS AN ENCAMPMENT HE STUMBLED AMONG.

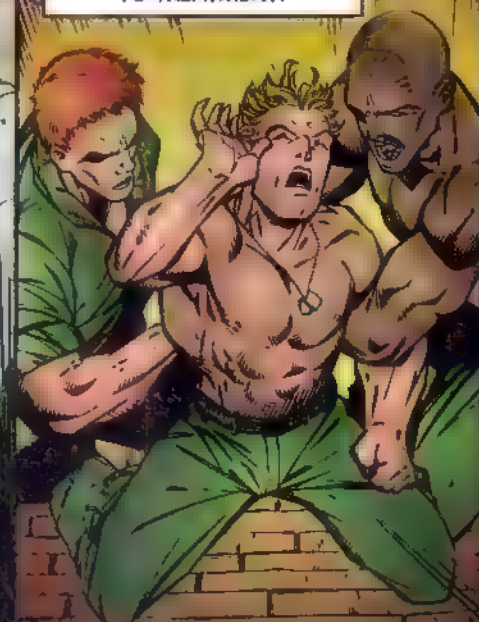
"AMERICAN P.O.W.'S. THEY'D BEEN TORTURED I THINK. IT HADN'T BEEN A PARTY FOR THEM, I KNOW THAT.

"AND THAT WAS WHEN THE EAGLE SCOUT PART OF CAP KICKED IN AGAIN. HE SAID THAT NO SOLDIER... ESPECIALLY NOT AMERICAN BOYS... SHOULD BE TREATED THIS WAY.

"HE WASN'T MUCH USE TO US FOR A WHILE AFTER THAT.

"WE NEXT THAWED HIM OUT IN THE EARLY NINETIES. SET HIM UP WITH A SEMBLANCE OF A WIFE AND FAMILY. HE SEEMED TO RESPOND WELL TO TREATMENT.

"BUT WE WERE SMART THIS TIME. WE WAITED...



"...WAITED UNTIL
WE NEEDED HIM
AGAIN.

"THAT
HAPPENED
RECENTLY.

"EVENTS FORCED
US TO AWAKE THE
PART OF HIM WE
HAD ALLOWED TO
STAY SLEEPING.

"THE RED
SKULL WAS
BACK FROM
THE GRAVE.

"SO THE RED,
WHITE AND BLUE
HAD TO COME
BACK TOO.

"IF NAZI GERMANY COULD
EVER BE SAID TO HAVE HAD
THEIR MOST DANGEROUS
WEAPON IN THE FORM OF
ONE MAN, IT WAS THE SKULL.

"HE'D DIED IN '45. CAP HAD TURNED
THE SKULL'S OWN WEAPON UPON
HIM -- THE SIEGFRIED VIRUS THAT
THE NAZIS HAD INTENDED ON USING
ON GEORGE PATTON.

"AND THE RED
SKULL DIED
SCREAMING.

"BUT NOW HE WAS BACK... SOMEHOW.
BETTER, STRONGER AND... MORE
TWISTED AND SICK IF THAT WAS POSSIBLE.

"CAP FOUGHT
HIM AND WON.

"THEN HE FOUGHT ZEMO, ANOTHER
ECHO FROM OUR HERO'S WARTIME.

"THEN MODOK... OR 'BIG HEAD', AS
WE CALL HIM WHEN WE'RE KICKING
BACK AFTER WORK AT S.H.I.E.L.D.

"CAP FOUGHT HIM TOO.
PLUS THE A.I.M. STOOGES
THAT MODOK BROUGHT
WITH HIM.

"CAP FOUGHT THEM
ALL AND BEAT THEM
ALL.

"BUT AFTER ALL,
WHY WOULDN'T
HE WIN? HE IS
CAPTAIN AMERICA."

AND THAT'S
ABOUT IT, SIR. THAT'S
EVERYTHING...



...EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT ME.

CAPTAIN AMERICA? WE DIDN'T HEAR YOU ENTER.

I CAN IMAGINE. SUCH ENGRASSING, LURID TALES CAN DRAW ONE'S ATTENTION. IN MY DAY IT WAS DAMON RUNYON STORIES IN COLLIERS. TIMES CHANGE.



YOU CALLED THIS MEETING. YOU REQUESTED NOT JUST MY PRESENCE, BUT ALSO FURY. I PRESUMED IT'S IMPORTANT, SO I ASKED FOR A FULL HISTORY OF YOU. THE TRUTH.

THE LAST PRESIDENT THAT KNEW IT ALL RESIGNED.

YES, THEY... ERR... TOLD ME.



SO WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY, CAPTAIN? SPEAK UP, YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS.

IF THE FLOOR IS MINE, THEN I WILL ADDRESS YOU, SIR, THOUGH I THINK SOME IN THIS ROOM WILL THINK MY ACTIONS FAR FROM FRIENDLY.



IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS I'VE BEEN ALLOWED TO REMEMBER MORE THAN EVER BEFORE. THE LAST FORTY YEARS WERE A DREAM. A BLUR.

MY LIFE HAS BEEN MANIPULATED AND TWISTED AND RUINED. AND ON WHOSE DECISION? FURY'S? POSSIBLY.



IT WAS A TOUGH CHOICE, CAP. BELIEVE ME. BUT SOMETIMES --

SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW ORDERS. THE DECISION TO SUSPEND MY EXISTENCE... EACH TIME IT'S BEEN YOU WHO SIGNED THE ORDER...

...BUT I'M CERTAIN THERE WERE OTHER MEN... SUITS IN ROOMS... IN THE SHADOWY PARTS OF AMERICA'S CAPITAL, WHO WHISPERED THOSE ORDERS TO YOU.

AM I RIGHT?



YOUR SILENCE IS TELLING, FURY. YOU WERE ONLY FOLLOWING ORDERS.

AS I RECALL THAT WAS THE EXCUSE A LOT OF OUR SECOND WORLD WAR ENEMIES GAVE US.



SO, I'VE BEGUN QUESTIONING WHERE MY LOYALTIES LIE. ARE THEY TO A GOVERNMENT I AM NOT SURE I TRUST AND CERTAINLY DON'T UNDERSTAND IN THIS ERA?

OR IS IT TO *THIS* COUNTRY? A COUNTRY I FOUGHT TO PROTECT... WHEN THAT FIGHT MEANT SOMETHING.

YOUR MISTAKE... S.H.I.E.L.D.'S MISTAKE... WAS GIVING ME TOO MUCH FREE WILL THIS TIME. YOU LET STEVE ROGERS LIVE A SEMBLANCE OF A LIFE BEFORE REACTIVATING CAPTAIN AMERICA. PERHAPS THAT WAS IT.

ANYWAY, ANY ATTEMPT TO DEACTIVATE ME AGAIN WILL BE RESISTED THIS TIME.



HOW CAN YOU STOP US?

THAT'S RIGHT, CAP. HOW --



DO YOU WANT TO GO TO WAR WITH ME, FURY? DO YOU REALLY WANT THAT?



FURTHERMORE, ANY INTERFERENCE WITH ME GOING MY OWN WAY WILL RESULT IN PUBLICITY. THE LEGEND... THE ONE YOU GREW UP WITH, MR. PRESIDENT... WILL BE REPLACED WITH THE FACTS. ALL THE DIRTY TRUTHS ABOUT CAPTAIN AMERICA.

I'M LEAVING THE "PROTECTION" OF S.H.I.E.L.D. THERE'S A NATION OUT THERE THAT I LOVE AND THAT I INTEND TO REDISCOVER.



WELL, I, FOR ONE, WON'T TRY TO STOP YOU, CAPTAIN.

THANK YOU, SIR.



MR.
PRESIDENT!

WHAT, FURY?
THIS IS THE RIGHT
THING. DOESN'T IT FEEL
GOOD TO DO THE RIGHT
THING... JUST THIS ONCE?



I
GUESS.

GOOD
LUCK, CAP.

YES,
CAPTAIN.
GOOD LUCK
AND GOD-
SPEED...



WHEREVER
YOUR DESTINY TAKES
YOU!